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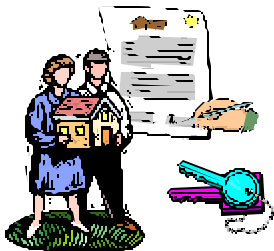
Stark County Law Library Association

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BEGINNERS

A Cast of Characters

**The email address,
info@starklaw
library.org really
works! TRY IT!!**



If you have both Microsoft Works and Access installed on your computer, I strongly suggest that you learn the Works database first and then progress to all the whistles and bells in Access.

In "Introduction to the Microsoft Works Database" by Alan Zisman at <http://www.zisman.ca/database/> the author teaches you how to create a database for your CD collection (nice to have, but not something practical for your legal practice). Work through the workshop until you get to "Record/Sort Record" section, we will cover that next month. Enter data for a case you are working on right now so the lesson will be as relevant as possible and you will be able to see the benefits of using a database. We will call this database our "Cast of Characters."

Despite its simplicity, a cataloging of key players is of great value. It can be an important aid during early witness interviews, as you evaluate case risk and compare your analysis to others on the trial team, and when you need to bring new trial team members up to speed on a case.¹

Open your database program and create the following fields: Name, Type, Role in Case, Issue Relationship, Evaluation, and Questions (use the "General" format for each field).

Begin your Cast of Characters as part of your initial interview with your client. The "Name" field seems self-explanatory, but it should be expanded to include anything that is important to your case, a hotel room number, a surgical procedure, a trade secret, key documents, physical evidence, the company where your chief witnesses are employed or "where critical case events occurred".² Anything important to your case belongs in the Cast, hence the "Type" field in which you can designate: person, organization, fact witness, expert witness, etc.

When trying to decide what should go into your Cast, here are two tests you may want to use:

1. "The Newbie Test" What people, documents, organizations and things would you need to give a new firm member who is joining your case?
2. "The Mentioned in Critical Facts Test" Are there important case facts that involve this entity?³

The "Role in Case" field should be a more specific, but **brief** explanation of why this entity is important to the case.

The "Issue Relationship" field will contain the key factual dispute. "For example, in a patent infringement case you might have both an infringement

A Cast of Characters (Continued)

and a validity issue. The players involved with the infringement issue are rarely those involved in the validity issue.”³

You need the “Evaluation” field to indicate the criticality and goodness/badness of each entity.

You are using a database to create your Cast of Characters because...

Database software... makes it easy to explore your Cast of Characters in ways that are simply impossible

using word processing software. For example, database software makes it easy to filter your Cast Of Characters down to any subset of interest. Rather than printing a report that lists every item, print a Cast of Characters that lists only witnesses, or one that lists only those players that you have designated as being extremely critical to the case or particularly good or bad.⁴



Intermediate

Googlerts

“Every day someone has fun with the Google API. The latest evidence is the Google search alert Googlert, at <http://www.googlert.com/>. This service can be set up to run Google searches and send you URLs of newly-indexed pages by e-mail.

The first thing you should know about this site is that you'll have to have a Google API key in order to use it. So if you don't have one, go to <http://www.google.com/apis/> and register to get one. It's without cost.

Got it? Okay, back to Googlert. When you get to the site you'll be asked to choose a user name and password and an e-mail address. You'll also be asked to enter your Google API key.

Once you've registered, you'll be able to set up your Googlerts. You'll have the opportunity to set up to five searches, using Google's format (that means Google's special syntaxes, etc.) You will also have the option to

specify how many results you want for each search. You may not request more than a total of 100 results for your five searches -- so you can have one search with 100 results, or two with 50 each, or three which have 50, 30, and 20 results, etc. You'll also have the option to only run the searches when you visit the site, or you can have the searches run automatically and the results e-mailed to you. Searches can be run every day, every two days, twice weekly, or once a week.

When you first run a search and get results, you'll get a ton of results because the search has never been run before. Afterwards you'll get far fewer results, unless you're running a very general search. When your search brings up new results, Googlert will send you a brief e-mail with the title, brief snippet, and URL from the pages that were found.”⁵

INTERMEDIATE

Googlerts (Continued)

A similar service called SearchAlert.net at <<http://www.searchalert.net/searchalert/default.jsp>> “helps you stay on top of the latest news and information from the Web. It is simple, easy and free - the way it should be.”

“As a SearchAlert.net subscriber, you enter words describing your

interest and then SearchAlert.net continually monitors Google for news and web pages related to your interest and automatically sends e-mails to you when new results appear. We do the work so you don't have to!” ⁶

ADVANCED

RSS & Aggregators

A news aggregator is like a Web browser and e-mail inbox combined.

What is RSS and what can it do for me? “RSS might stand for ‘Rich Site Summary,’ ‘RDF Site Summary,’ ‘Really Simple Syndication,’ or something else, depending upon your point of view.” ⁷

Whatever it really stands for, it “is a method of describing news or other Web content that is available for “feeding” (distribution or syndication) from an online publisher to Web users. RSS is an application of the Extensible Markup Language (XML) that adheres to the World Wide Web Consortium's Resource Description Framework (RDF). Originally developed by Netscape for its browser's Netcenter channels, the RSS specification is now available for anyone to use.” ⁸

“RSS feeds are available from many major legal Web sites, major news services like CNN and most legal Web logs. Just look on a site for a link or button that says

To use these services, you will need to download a newsreader program. [often called a news aggregator] These programs are like a Web browser and e-mail inbox combined. When you launch the program on your computer, it opens a list of articles found on the Web that meet your criteria. Clicking on one of the headlines brings up the article in a browser window.

Some popular newsreader software includes AmphetaDesk, <<http://www.disobey.com/amphetadesk/>> and FeedReader <<http://www.feedreader.com/>> which are free, and NewzCrawler, <<http://www.newzcrawler.com/>> which has a free trial version and a full version costing \$24.95.

‘I’m not going to tell lawyers to subscribe to 200 news feeds and try to make sense of it all,’ says Cohen. ‘But three to four feeds that pertain to them, specifically fed to one aggregator, ought to be a manageable level of information.’ ⁹



XML

FOOTNOTES

- ¹⁻⁴ Krenhel, Greg. "Creating a Great Cast of Characters." CaseSoft Article Library. 8 March 2002. CaseSoft. 28 Feb 2003. <http://www.lawcommerce.com/litigation/art_cast_characters.asp>
- ⁵ Reproduced with permission of ResearchBuzz <<http://www.researchbuzz.com>>. Calishain, Tara. ResearchBuzz #220. 28 Feb 2003.
- ⁶ "SearchAlert.net." 2002. searchalert.net. 13 March 2003. <<http://www.searchalert.net/searchalert/default.jsp>>
- ⁷ "Technology Reports: RDF Rich Site Summary (RSS)." Cover Pages. 6 March 2003. XML.org. 13 March 2003. <<http://www.oasis-open.org/cover/rss.html>>
- ⁸ "RDF Site Summary." searchWebServices.com. 2003. TechTarget. 13 March 2003. <http://searchwebservicess.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid26_gci813358,00.html> 
- ⁹ "Netting Information: It's Not All We Promised, But the Web Still Has Plenty to Offer." ABAnetwork. 6 March 2003. ABA Journal. 13 March 2003.  <<http://www.abanet.org/journal/redesign/03fonlin.html>>

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